

STARLIGHT

MAKING AN

IMPACT



Impact Report 2021



Starlight is the national charity dedicated to the protection of play for seriously ill children in hospital and at home. Thanks to our brilliant supporters, we use the power of play to make the experience of illness and treatment better for children and their families.



PROTECTING PLAY

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Despite the uncertainties of Covid-19, the Starlight team have risen to the challenges and opportunities of the year with positivity and determination.

Inspired by our role as Protectors of Play, together we've continued to find new ways to meet the needs of seriously ill children, their families and health professionals by listening and learning – always ready to respond to the world around us.

We believe in the importance of childhood. We never forget that it is a vital time in all our lives, it shapes who we are and helps us to navigate the world. It's a time for play, creativity, adventure, making friends and having fun. But when a child is diagnosed with a serious illness or needs to spend time in hospital, treatment can overwhelm this precious time.



Starlight is here to protect the space, the opportunity and the permission for children to play in hospital – we protect their right to play.

This year we've strengthened an already awesome team with the appointment of a new Head of Play from Great Ormond Street Hospital, Laura Walsh and the Founding Director of Play England, Adrian Voce as Head of our new Policy and Public Affairs team. With this experience and the unique insight that families have shared with us, we aim to develop a voice for play which in time will help us to redress some of the inequalities in access to play in hospital.

Our new strategy, brand and visual identity have engaged new supporters and given us real stand-out in hospitals. The characters help to bring colour, light, warmth and laughter to some of the darker times. Our service delivery team have been inventive, especially in ways to safely bring families together for much-needed social contact and connection with drive-in movies and online parties. Despite the challenges, our fundraising team have found creative ways to replace activities that have continued to be affected by Covid.



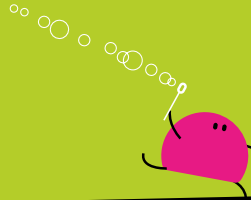
This year we are especially grateful for your continued support of Starlight, we know it's been a difficult time for everyone. There is still uncertainty, but thanks to you we look forward to the year ahead with confident plans and excitement about the difference we will make with the power of play.

Thank you,

Cathy Gilman
CEO of Starlight







MAKING

THE HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE

POSITIVE



If children don't have the opportunity to play, they get anxious, bored or frustrated. Play is a really good way for a child to forget why they are here, help their recovery and see a positive side of being in hospital.

Hazel, Health Play Specialist, St George's Tooting

Hospital play and distraction

Hospitals can be an isolating, scary and anxious place to be for us all, but particularly for children.

By using the power of play, Starlight makes sure that a sense of normality is maintained in children's lives, despite receiving treatment. This year, we have continued to adapt our services, found innovative ways of ensuring the pandemic doesn't stop us delivering play, and introduced new types of resources to hospitals.

We are working closely with hospitals and hospices to provide play, distraction, and entertainment services, helping to improve mental, physical, social and emotional wellbeing in the most challenging circumstances. In 2021, we have focused on hospitals in areas of multiple deprivation. These areas have limited access to play services which results in an inadequate hospital experience for children and parents.



DISTRACTING

1.2m⁺

estimated number of
times our boxes have been
accessed in hospitals in 2021

76%

of health professionals
agreed that our services made
treatment easier to complete

almost

500

hospitals and hospices
worked with us

Distraction Boxes



Our Distraction Boxes are portable toolkits filled with toys, puzzles and conversation starters that help health professionals to distract children during scary medical procedures.

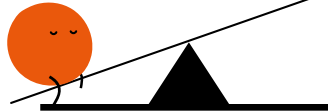
Whether on a hospital ward, in a hospice, A&E or even the back of an ambulance, having something distracting can help with administering treatment by keeping children calm and as relaxed as possible.

On average, each box is used in up to 2,000 interactions per year.



Only **6%** of health professionals reported that children were happy in hospital

This rose to **76%** when using our Distractions Boxes



810

boxes sent in 2021

797,040

estimated number of times our Distraction Boxes were used by children in 2021 despite Covid restrictions (an increase of 25% from 2020)

91%

of hospital staff who provided feedback told us that our Distraction Box helped develop relationships between them and the children

Boost Boxes

Our Boost Boxes are packed with toys, games and arts and crafts designed to entertain and delight during a stay in hospital.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have adapted our boxes to include individual Isolation Packs. Each single-use pack is given to a child to keep to support infection control. With no visits allowed from siblings and friends, and few others to play with in hospital, these resources are more valuable than ever.

It's important to listen to children and young people and tailor experiences wherever possible to reflect age, ability, and situation. Our Sensory Boost Boxes continue to provide stimulation for children with neurocognitive conditions and, in time for Christmas, we sent arts and crafts boxes to almost 100 children at home.



The Boost Boxes during Covid-19 have been phenomenal. They have helped so much.

Abbi Spurdle, Play Specialist
at Queen's Hospital, Romford

3,671

boxes sent to hospitals
and hospices across the
country in 2021

almost

2/3

said it gave parents
a chance to relax

almost

1/3

health professionals agreed
that no sedation was required
in some of their procedures as
a result of using the Boost Box

87%

of practitioners said that our
Boost Boxes created a more
positive hospital experience
for children

LIFTING



SPIRITS

Gaming Bundle



As part of our mission to support children, young people and families to escape the difficult reality of living with a serious illness, we also offer healthcare professionals a Starlight Gaming Bundle for their hospital or hospice. Gaming Bundles include a Nintendo Switch, Nintendo 3DS and a choice of games to keep children entertained throughout their time in hospital.



207

Gaming bundles sent to hospitals in 2021

228,528

times our gaming devices were used

83%

of practitioners said it helped develop a relationship between staff and children

81%

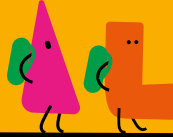
of practitioners said it created a more positive hospital experience for children

Virtual Reality

In 2021 we've also been trialling some Virtual Reality (VR) headsets with Leeds Children's Hospital, to look at digital methods of distraction and how they can help during diagnoses and treatment. Funded by the True Colours Trust,

we seconded a Health Play Specialist to focus on this exciting area of work. In 2021 we completed the first phase and will report on the findings of the second phase, comparing VR to other forms of tech for play, in summer 2022.





MAKING PRECIOUS TIME TOGETHER



I feel emotional about it as we never get a chance to do anything like this. It's just too difficult. My son has now experienced something he'd never have done if we hadn't been invited.

Parent

Escapes, Breaks and Days

Positive social connections with people at all stages of life help to ensure healthy development, both physically and emotionally, and that's what we aim to achieve with our programme of Starlight Escapes, Breaks and Days.

In 2021 we were delighted to be able to resume these in-person events. We invited families to our first-ever summer festival, hosted families in specially adapted cottages at Brickhouse Farm, a day-out to Legoland, and a football day at The FA's national training centre, St George's Park.

We know just how important these events are for families who have had an especially tough year. Lockdown has really reminded us all how important it is to be together, something we value highly at Starlight.



Summer festival



For families like us where time is precious, these fun, happy memories are priceless. This has given us something to look forward to as a family that we can enjoy together.

Parent



Starlight Escapes

are events which give everyone the chance to have fun and relax.



Starlight Days

are special events which connect families with similar interests, for example football or gaming.



Starlight Breaks

are holidays for families living with complex, long-term conditions which extend past hospital.

In 2021...

76

children attended eight
virtual parties

228

children received
at-home resources

90%

of parents who provided
feedback said our virtual
pantomime gave their child
something to look forward to

202

children and their families
attended Starlight events:

**115 at
Escapes**

**67 at
Days**

**20 at
Breaks**

Our son Bertie, who has a progressive muscle weakness condition, gained so much confidence from going on scary rides he had heard about. He felt so brave! It was also the happiest we had seen his sister in ages. It was just so lovely to have such a fun time together – we laughed so much!



Alton
Towers

**BUILDING
CONFIDENCE**

St George's Park

As parents we felt so happy watching the children run around care-free, enjoying the company of the other lovely children. We feel so lucky to be part of the wonderful family that is Starlight.

MAKING

MEMORIES

Rides make my complex-needs-children very happy and excited. Making memories as a family means the world to us. We can't thank Starlight enough for their hard work and support for families like us who need their help.

Legoland

Play Week

Each October Starlight celebrates National Play in Hospital Week. It's an opportunity to champion the importance of play in hospital and highlight the work of the fantastic play specialists within the NHS.

Play specialists are some of the many unsung heroes of the NHS, who work tirelessly to make sure that the children in their care can still experience the joy and value of play. Each year we crown Starlight's Health Play Specialist of the Year, and in 2021 our winner was Julie Morris who was nominated by her team at Kingston Hospital. We also gave awards to teams and individuals

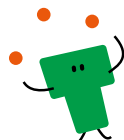
from Ipswich Hospital, James Cook University Hospital and Southampton Hospital. We were blown away by such fantastic examples of the power of play across the UK.

During Play Week, our Impact and Insights team published 'The Importance of Play in Hospital' report, which showed the lack of resources and access to play in hospital settings. Highlighting that over half of hospitals that apply for Starlight services have no funding to provide play, the report gained national media interest and was featured in The Telegraph, The Times and Sky News.



I think it is so rewarding to be a Play Specialist and it is so nice to see the difference in children when you see them playing. You build relationships with our regular children that come in. They even say they are looking forward to coming into hospital. They can cry when they go home. It is such a rewarding job.

Julie Morris, Starlight Health Play Specialist of the Year 2021



Income and reach



I don't want my twin girls to be scared of the hospital, but because of their condition, I need them to go. The toys make them smile, they think 'what am I going to get today?' They see it more as getting a treat than hospital being horrible. It really works.

Keely, mum

1.2m⁺ children reached in hospital in 2021:



*estimate





LOOKING FORWARD

Innovation and adaptability are baked into the Starlight strategy – we listen and respond to the needs of children and young people – and have exciting plans and changes for the year ahead.

Measuring our impact

Measuring our reach and impact, and monitoring progress against key areas is how we are going to measure progress against our organisational objectives.

The framework below has been trialled in 2021/22 and will be used

as the benchmark for evaluating all of our services in 2022/23. There are five broad outcomes, developed with health professionals and families we work with, each with more tangible performance indicators we will track.

Children's Services

Over the next year we will be keeping a blend of live and virtual events to reach more children and families than ever before. In September 2021 we re-launched Starlight Escapes, Breaks and Days to overwhelming success.

Protecting play

Reaching all seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families whilst being inclusive, equitable and egalitarian in our approach. Enabling and influencing others to:

- implement measures that protect play for all seriously ill and hospitalised children
- make sure families and hospitals have access to proper resources

Physical wellbeing

Ensuring that our services support children's recovery through play for:

- physical respite
- improving recovery
- rehabilitation
- provide distraction from pain and strain of treatment
- decrease need for sedation
- reduce the length of stay in hospital

Mental wellbeing

Reduce the long term negative mental health impacts of hospitalisation and illness on children and their families, including:

- positive memories associated with childhood and treatment
- feeling more confident and resilient
- coping better
- reduced long term anxiety, stress and distress associated with illness and treatment
- not feeling afraid of being in hospital

We are planning many more exciting residential trips and special days out, offering seriously ill children and their families the time, space and opportunity to have a break from treatment and some fun.

Hospital Services

As well as developing our family services, we are improving our hospital resources too. Our Story Box trial last year has seen us deliver digital story players and books into 100 hospitals. This year we are going to roll these out as part of our

standard programme and trial new services for teenagers to support their wellbeing and education needs whilst in hospital.

We are also currently trialling other exciting new boxes and are looking forward to providing a wider range of play resources in hospital in the future.

Children and their parents tell us that they want more access to technology in hospital, so we are always looking for fantastic organisations to partner with to help provide play tech.

Emotional wellbeing

Creating a positive and uplifting experience of hospital for seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families, including:

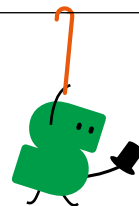
- having fun both at home and in hospital
- feeling happier (more positive emotions) when ill, in treatment and in hospital
- reduced anxiety, stress and distress about being ill, treatment and hospitalisation
- better engagement with treatment

Social wellbeing

Creating opportunities for children and families to build and strengthen social connections and combat isolation to:

- able to get away and have fun/respite/ relax as a family
- build bonds
- strengthen relationships among themselves, with staff and other families
- feel less lonely and isolated
- feel supported





TheRockinR charity have been providing customised, medical grade carts with built-in gaming consoles for several years and Starlight is partnering with them in 2022 to roll-out Xbox gaming carts to children's wards across the country to provide entertainment, social connection and a welcome distraction.

We will also be providing new Sensory Units to hospital wards and hospices. These units provide a unique, portable kaleidoscope of colour, sound and touch which turns any room into a sensory playroom.

Starlight Health Play Specialists

Thanks to the generous funding of some key supporters, Starlight is now directly funding a pilot scheme for new Health Play Specialists. We are evaluating their work to assess the most effective, beneficial approaches, and how hospitals need to adapt to ensure the work is fully supported.

The next step is to encourage all hospitals, clinical commissioning groups and relevant health professionals to adopt the good practice that we and others are establishing and to ensure the vitally important role of play is fully considered in the lives of the children they care for.

Access to play is a human right. Starlight aims to take action to create positive change for children during illness.

Policy and the inequality of play

Having spent four decades providing play, distraction and restful breaks from treatment for seriously ill children, Starlight knows more than most about the power of play. This coming year we will be consulting on what is needed to make significant and lasting changes to play provision in healthcare. The role of our new Policy & Public Affairs Team will form a major part of this work.

Although we know the huge impact play has on children's development, we need to correctly identify the specific problems, inequalities and barriers faced in providing play for all children in hospital, and work to understand how Starlight can play a part in this to make sure that no child misses out.



I would like to say a big thank you to Starlight's supporters. You have provided the children with such appropriate equipment to enable them to have fun and do what children do best which is to play.

Diane, Health Play Specialist

MAKING A DIFFERENCE





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